

THE TIMES.

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TENTH AND BATE STREETS,
RICHMOND, VA.

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The Weekly Times—One dollar a year by mail. Specimen copies sent free.

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Richmond, Va.

NORFOLK BUREAU, NO. 5 BANK STREET

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Branch Office: 1104 Decatur Street.

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CONVICT LABOR IN THE SQUARE.

The proposition to substitute honest labor for the convict labor, which is now used in the Capitol Square, and to a certain extent in the Capitol building, is one that for a number of years has been constantly pressed upon the attention of the General Assembly, but so far without success.

It is not to be supposed that the members of our Legislature have any preference for working men in striped clothing. The explanation of their retention in the Capitol Square has always been that it entailed a smaller expense upon the State, which was already required to support them, than free labor would do. It was a measure of economy which was thought to be demanded by the general principle which the State was seeking to apply in every branch of the public administration.

Whether it would not have been better to relax the principle in this instance is a question which might well have received an affirmative reply. The offense to the sense of public propriety which was caused by the presence of convicts in the Capitol Square and building might very well have justified the State in making a small disbursement of the public funds to remove so repulsive an element. To have a small body of convicts, clothed in their suggestive prison garb, not merely tramping about the walks in the square, but even brushing against refined visitors while in the act of examining the curiosities in the library, is a spectacle that casts a serious reflection upon Virginia, and has raised a sense of shame in many of her sons who have witnessed it.

The present General Assembly has many new representatives in its membership, whose susceptibilities have not yet been hardened by familiarity with this spectacle, and we sincerely hope that when they come to vote on the question of abolishing convict labor about the Capitol grounds and building they will not only favor the proposition themselves, but use their influence to alter the views of those of their associates who are at present opposed to a change.

This is a measure in which the people of the whole Commonwealth are generally interested, but to the people of this city it is a measure which is of peculiar personal importance, for Richmond possesses a special property in the Capitol Square and building. The daily disfigurement of these localities by the presence of convicts is more than usually odious to our people. Now that the financial condition of the State promises to improve the Legislature should not hesitate to spend the few hundred dollars which will be required to remove the blot which is causing so much dissatisfaction.

PROTECTION OF THE TERRAPIN.

It is decidedly pleasing to find at this time, when the State has not yet fully recovered from the reaction caused by the recent boom in real estate that the Committee on the Chesapeake and its tributaries have reported favorably on the bill to furnish additional protection to the terrapin.

This protection, it may be remarked in passing, is no doubt regarded by the terrapin, which is an animal of unusual acuteness, as may be discovered by the glance of his eye when his head is thrust above water in the light in which the sound Democrat regards the high tariff of the Republican—that is, as a protection which does not protect. However, the terrapin, judging him by his last associations in life, is an animal of aristocratic propensities, and is probably very much obliged to our General Assembly for taking steps that will save him from the clutch of every marauder who comes along and preys upon him for the table of the millionaire.

The interest which our legislators are now showing in his temporary welfare is highly encouraging. It would seem to prove that they are confidently anticipating the return of brighter days—days when the visions of the now historic boomer will be fully realized and terrapin stews will become the ordinary food of the owner of town lots.

The General Assembly is to be warmly commended, not only for its foresight, but also for the pains which it is taking to provide an abundance of terrapins for the period of prosperity which its action foreshadows. When that period arrives the health of the Assembly will be drunk with unexampled heartiness, and it will be lauded to the skies for having exhibited in anticipation so just an appreciation of one of the most delightful things of this life.

If this bill becomes law, the terrapins of the Chesapeake can during the greater portion of each year disport themselves in the waters of that beautiful bay in perfect safety, and in the midst of their mysterious comings can whisper an eulogium upon the Virginia legislator, which, taunt as it will be, will find an echo, though for a different reason, in the heart of every man who believes a fortune is yet to be derived from the corner lots which were left on his hands.

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NOTWITHSTANDING that the Tsing-Li Yamen or council of state of China opposed the idea of the Emperor's being instructed in English, the Dowager Empress insisted that it should be done. So his Celestial Majesty is now struggling with the intricacies of the English tongue.

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